



NEWS RELEASE

IDAHO WATER RESOURCE BOARD

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LITTLE SALMON RIVER BASIN PLAN NOW IN EFFECT

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More than 68 miles of streams and rivers are now protected under Idaho law following the formal implementation of the comprehensive state water plan for the Little Salmon River Basin, officials with the Idaho Water Resource Board announced today.

The plan for the 576-square mile basin provides “recreational river” status to segments of the Little Salmon River and three tributary creeks. The designation establishes strict limits on new development but preserves irrigation, livestock and wildlife watering and other traditional uses.

Board Chairman Joe Jordan signed formal letters late last week which transmitted the plan to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the Northwest Power Planning Council. The transmittal of the plan to the two agencies is required under Idaho law as the final step before a comprehensive state water plan goes into effect.

The Board will pursue minimum stream flow water rights for the Rapid River and for approximately 25 miles of the Little Salmon River now afforded protected status.

The plan has been under development for more than three years, prompted by flooding and mudslides in the Basin in early 1997. Formulation of the plan included nearly 20 meetings of a special citizen advisory group, information meetings and public hearings conducted in the Basin.

The Board adopted the plan last October. It then went to Idaho’s Legislature, which approved the plan in February. Governor Dirk Kempthorne signed the plan into law in March.

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In the plan the Board set down recreational river protected status for the following streams in the basin:

- Little Salmon River, Highway 95 bridge at river mile 24.7 (above “The Falls”) to its confluence with the Salmon River (24.7 miles);
- Boulder Creek, headwaters to its confluence with the Little Salmon River (18.6 miles);
- Hard Creek, headwaters to its confluence with Hazard Creek (12.0 miles); and
- Hazard Creek, Hazard Lake outlet to its confluence with the Little Salmon River (12.5 miles).

Recreational River status prohibits such things as constructions of dams, dredge or placer mining, sand and gravel extraction or other types of stream channel alterations. Recreational status does permit the construction of water diversion works for various water use purposes and alterations of the stream for protection of private property, for flood control and for fish and wildlife enhancements.

The Little Salmon River Basin Plan is available on the Board’s Internet web site at:
www.idwr.state.id.us/planpol/watplan/planning/planning.htm.

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